



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



SOUTH DAKOTA RECEIVES GRANT OPPORTUNITY FOR STATE CEMETERY

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has notified the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs they may be awarded grant funds for the construction of a state veterans cemetery.

"This announcement is great news for the men and women of South Dakota and the surrounding area who served this country," said Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA). "South Dakotans in the eastern part of the state will not have to travel 370 plus miles to bury their heroes in a veteran's cemetery."

"Now the real work begins," said Aaron Pollard, Deputy Secretary for SDDVA. "Our Department will begin meeting with NCA, the State Office of Engineering and our design firm, Stockwell Engineers."

This announcement coincides with the City of Sioux Falls' first reading of their ordinance gifting over 60 acres of land to SDDVA for the construction of a state veterans cemetery.

"This state veterans cemetery is the culmination of a lot of hard work between numerous partners who are committed to taking care of our veterans," said Zimmerman.

The NCA Design and Construction Service provides planning, design and construction project management, design and construction standards, environmental, energy, and historic preservation services and expertise to deliver high quality and cost-effective cemetery facilities that honor veterans with final resting places and commemorate their service to our nation. They provide leadership, expertise, and advice in the development, acquisition, expansion and preservation to create veterans cemeteries as lasting memorials which invoke a sense of honor and dignity for our Nation's veterans.

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GRANT COUNTY BECOMES PURPLE HEART COUNTY

During their September Commission meeting, the Grant County Commissioners adopted a proclamation proclaiming Grant County as a "Purple Heart County."

The proclamation states that "Grant County appreciates the sacrifices Purple Heart recipients made in defending our freedoms and believe it is important they be acknowledged for their courage and sacrifices."

Joining Scott Malimanek (Grant County VSO) for the photo are: Kenneth Teunissen, Buck Underwood, Gary Henly, Karen Layher, Dennis Adelman, and Tim Jurgens.



PIERRE PROCLAIMED PURPLE HEART CAPITOL CITY

Last week, the city of Pierre proclaimed the city the "Purple Heart Capitol City."

During the regular city council meeting, Mayor Harding read the proclamation and expressed the city's gratitude for those who have sacrificed so much for our country.

Mayor Harding presented the proclamation to John Fette, a Purple Heart recipient, former member of the SDDVA team, and lifetime member of The Military Order Of The Purple Heart.



HISA GRANTS

The Home Improvement and Structural Alteration (HISA) Grant provides medically necessary improvements and structural alterations to veterans' and servicemembers' primary residences. Although the grant package is available online, some VSOs may have old paper copies. These should be destroyed. It's critical to remember that prior approval by VA is the first step in the process. This ensures a veteran does not complete a project that the VA does not deem medically necessary, which necessitates out-of-pocket expenses.

Prior to beginning a project, a veteran needs to make sure the following steps are followed:

- A VA physician (typically the Veteran's primary care provider) has written a prescription or approved the project. This should include:
 - ◊ Identification of the improvement or structural alteration.
 - ◊ The diagnosis and medical justification for the improvement or structural alteration.

HISA consults are reviewed by the Major Medical Committee on a weekly basis, usually on Mondays unless there is a holiday. Veterans will receive a decision letter approximately a week after the committee meets. The letter will indicate approval, denial, or deferment.

VSOs may contact Brian at 605-336-3230, Ext. 9-6393 if they have questions.

THE SOUL OF VETERANS

VA Chaplains and the Sioux Falls Vet Center are jointly hosting "*The Soul of Veterans – Building Spiritual Strengths*," a spiritual group for veterans who have survived difficult and/or traumatic experiences.

The new group begins Monday, October 22, at the Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th St).

Veterans must commit to meeting once a week for eight weeks. Meetings will end on December 17, 2018. Please RSVP by calling 605-330-4552.

GIFTING OF LAND FOR STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

Tuesday evening during their City Council meeting, the city of Sioux Falls had the first reading of their ordinance gifting land to the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. The land gifted will be used for the creation of a state veterans cemetery.

The final reading of the ordinance will be held October 15.

SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman and Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard were on hand for the official reading and thanked Mayor Tenhaken, the Commission and the city for their support of this great project.



VA ANNOUNCES EXTENSION, EXPANSION OF CONTRACT WITH TRIWEST FOR COMMUNITY CARE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has reached an agreement with TriWest Health Care Alliance (TriWest) on a one-year extension of its current coverage of the Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) and Veterans Choice Program (VCP).

The Department also announced that it has reached an agreement with TriWest that will expand TriWest's services to all regions across the country under this program.

The expansion of TriWest's role will ensure access to community care where needed until the next generation of community care contracts are awarded and implemented.

"TriWest has worked collaboratively with VA from the start of the Veterans Choice Program to address implementation challenges and to improve the program to better serve veterans," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Extending the time and reach of our partnership with TriWest will ensure veterans get the care they need while the department transitions to delivering care under the MISSION Act next year."

Separately, the department has reached an agreement with Health Net Federal Services (HNFS) on the PC3 and VCP closeout plan and associated contract modification. Under this modification, VA and HNFS will continue to partner to ensure a seamless transition of care and services, so veterans continue to get the care they need.

Finally, the VA has extended its current dialysis contracts with multiple partners for six months, until March 31, 2019. The VA will issue a Request for Proposal for the replacement contracts in October 2018, with ultimate contract awards anticipated in spring 2019.



VA MEDICAL CENTER RATINGS

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) efforts to remain transparent and hold VA facilities accountable, the VA released [end of fiscal year 2018 \(FY2018\) hospital Star ratings](#), which evaluate and benchmark quality of care delivery at VA medical centers (VAMCs) across the nation.

"With closer monitoring and increased medical center leadership and support we have seen solid improvements at most of our facilities," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Even our highest performing facilities are getting better, and that is driving up our quality standards across the country."

The Star rating designation is designed to help the VA identify best practices of its top performing hospitals and share them across VA's health care system to achieve system-wide improvements.

Compared with data from the same period a year ago, the release of VA's Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) report shows 66 percent of VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) have improved in overall quality in the third quarter — with the largest gains seen in areas where there were VA-wide improvement initiatives, such as mortality, length of stay and avoidable adverse events. Six VAMCs experienced a decrease in quality, and improvement activities are underway at each of these facilities.

Additionally, of the medical centers placed under the Strategic Action for Transformation program (StAT), an initiative that monitors high-risk medical centers and mobilizes resources to assist them, eight are no longer considered high risk and 80 percent (12 medical centers) show measurable improvements since being placed under StAT in January 2018.

"There's no doubt that there's still plenty of work to do, but I'm proud of our employees, who work tirelessly to move VA in the right direction for veterans and taxpayers," Wilkie said.

GOVERNOR VISITS SDDVA CLAIMS OFFICE

Governor Dennis Daugaard and First Lady Linda visited the SDDVA Claims Office in Sioux Falls this week. Governor Daugaard commended the team for their commitment to veterans as well as applauded the Department's outreach ventures like Operation RAV and CARS.

"We were honored to have the Governor and First Lady visit our office and discuss issues impacting our veterans and their families," said Program Manager Heather Bullerman.



MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN

Ghosts, Goblins, and Ghouls!

As soon as that first glimmer of autumn sparks, it occurs. The Halloween decorating begins and pumpkins, cornstalks, hay bales, scarecrows, witches, ghosts, goblins, and ghouls are everywhere. It's a tradition that most of us enjoy. But for some veterans, it's a reminder of the ghosts, ghouls, and goblins they live with every day.

Ghosts, ghouls, and goblins our veterans deal with every day might include: flashbacks, PTSD, survival guilt, chemical exposures, rape, harassment, mental illness, or physical injuries.

If you ask a veteran what serving was all about, you'll get as many different answers as the variety of treats that trick-or-treaters get. Always help them remember they are not alone. Listen patiently, offer encouragement and remind them that there are resources to help them.

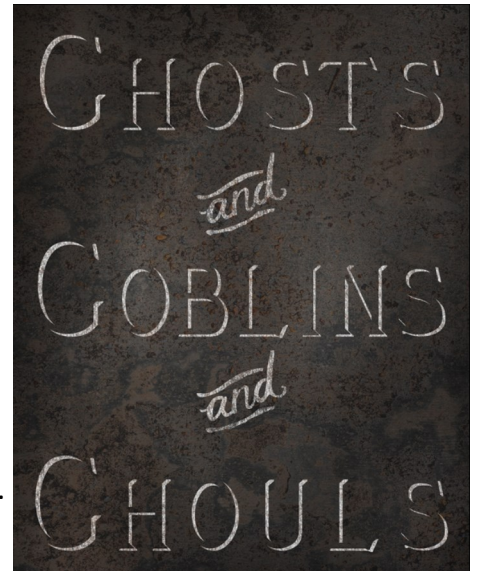
Connecting veterans with resources to help them is the best treat that you can give them. Here are just a few of the numerous resources to assist veterans and their families:

- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp>.
- Coaching into Care (<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/>), a VA telephone service to educate, support, and empower family members and friends who are seeking care or services for a veteran.
- Center for Women Veterans (<https://www.va.gov/womenvet/resources/index.asp>).
- VA Mental Health services are provided at VA Medical Centers, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Vet Centers, and mobile Vet Centers. Additional resource tools can be found at: (<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/VAMentalHealthGroup.asp>).
- Behavioral Health Services (<http://dss.sd.gov/behavioralhealth/>).
- Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1.
- Primary care providers.
- County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers - located in all 66 counties and on all nine reservations --- <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>
- South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs - 605.773.3269 or check us out on the web: (vetaffairs.sd.gov).

A wound gets worse when it's neglected. Everyday we have signs and messages that inspire us. We need to take the time to notice the signs and put them to use.

Don't let veterans' past skeletons control their todays and tomorrows. By reaching out you can help veterans through a difficult time.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



PAY FOR SUCCESS

With research showing that veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) face significant barriers to employment, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and several state, city and nonprofit organizations recently created a first-of-its-kind “Pay for-Success” project to improve employment outcomes for such veterans.

The Veterans Coordinated Approach to Recovery and Employment (Veterans CARE) project was launched Oct. 3 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the City of Boston, New York City partners and the non-profit organization Social Finance, which stemmed from the VA’s grant award to the organization, and will serve 480 veterans over three years in New York City; Boston and Brockton, Massachusetts; and Central and Western Massachusetts.

“This project demonstrates that supporting veterans depends on networks of collaborative partnerships, as well as great research and innovative ideas,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Research and innovation are fundamental to improving the health care and benefits for our nation’s veterans.”

According to research, PTSD interferes with a person’s ability to thrive in the workforce, and has been found to impact sustained employment and income negatively. In addition, a negative cycle exists between unemployment and PTSD — persistent unemployment often is linked to negative health conditions, including depression, which can exacerbate PTSD symptoms.

Further, [VA research](#) noted that up to 20 percent of veterans from recent tours of duty have PTSD, and a 2015 analysis found that veterans’ labor force participation had declined over the previous 35 years, in close correlation with a growth in service-connected disability.

The Veterans CARE project will involve local VA medical centers to deliver Individual Placement and Support (IPS), an evidence-based approach to supported employment, to program participants. The Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center (TVAMC) will oversee and monitor the project.

“The Veterans CARE project will take our work from the research arena into real-world settings where we plan to achieve the highest level of impact of IPS at full scale,” said Veterans CARE Study Chair Dr. Lori Davis. “Sustained meaningful work is a key part of the recovery plan for veterans living with PTSD.”

Pay for Success is a public finance model that harnesses the power of the capital markets to address critical social and environmental challenges and improve the lives of those in need. In this Pay for Success project, BNP Paribas, Northern Trust, The Dakota Foundation, Deutsche Bank and Robin Hood Founda-

tion provided \$5.1 million in impact capital to fund the project.

“We are excited to launch the first Pay for Success project globally to support veterans, who have served our nation so honorably,” said Tracy Palandjian, CEO and co-founder of Social Finance. “The Veterans CARE project is about bringing the public, private and social sectors together to help Veterans with PTSD secure meaningful employment and lead healthier, happier lives.”

VA’s Center for Innovation and the Corporation for National and Community Service’s Social Innovation Fund are providing \$3 million, which is matched by local government partners, to repay project investors if the project achieves measurable results for veterans.

For more information about the Veterans CARE project, including additional quotes from project partners and a fact sheet, go to <http://socialfinance.org/focus-areas/workforce/veterans-care-project/>.

Veterans CARE Project



EXAM REIMBURSEMENT FOR VETERANS

The South Dakota Division of Insurance has obtained approval from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans to obtain reimbursement for exam fees for insurance producer licenses in the State of South Dakota.

This approval has been retroactively approved effective July 1, 2017. No exams taken prior to that date are eligible for reimbursement.

To obtain reimbursement a veteran must complete OMB form 2900-0695. A sample of this form can be found at this web address: https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing_certification.asp. The checklist for helping a veteran complete the reimbursement form can be found on this same website by clicking the link "VA Licensing and Certification Pamphlet".

The facility code assigned to South Dakota is 46000041 and should be included on the reimbursement form in box 8 or box 11. The approved exams are:

- SD Crop Producer
- SD Personal Lines Producer
- SD Property and Casualty Producer
- SD Casualty Producer
- SD Property Producer
- SD Accident and Health of Sickness Producer
- SD Life Producer
- SD Bail Bonds Producer
- SD Life, Accident and Health or Sickness Producer

If a veteran has questions they should go to www.GIBILL.va.gov and click on "Ask a Question and Find Answers."

WOMAN VETERANS LICENSE PLATES AVAILABLE

South Dakota now offers woman veteran specialty license plates. Applicants must sign an affidavit stating that they are an honorably discharged veteran who has served on active duty in the armed forces of the U.S. Applicants must pay a \$10 special plate fee, a \$5 mailing fee and annual vehicle registration fees. To learn more about the specialty plates visit: http://dor.sd.gov/Motor_Vehicles/License_Plates/Military_Plates/Military_Plates.aspx.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 5-7—VFW Council of Administration—Cedar Shores Resort—Oacoma
Oct 6—VFW State Commander/Aux. President Homecoming—Cedar Shores Resort—Oacoma
Oct 8—Native American Heritage Day (state offices closed)
Oct 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—RedRossa Grille—Pierre—8:00 am (CT)
Oct 12-13—DAV Fall Conference—DAV Dept. Headquarters (1519 W. 51st Street) - Sioux Falls
Oct 15—Sioux Falls City Council Meeting—2nd Reading of Land Gifting for State Veterans Cemetery
Oct 19—Open House new Spirit Lake CBOC—3:00 pm (CT)
Oct 23—SD Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters (209 N. Garfield Ave.—Sioux Falls) - 10:00 am (CT)
Nov 11—Veterans Day Community Program—Lincoln High School—Sioux Falls—10:30 am (CT)
Nov 11—Veterans Day Last Call Ceremony—SFVAHCS—1:30 pm (CT)
Nov 12—State Offices Closed
Nov 16—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)
Nov 16—Dakota Dunes CBOC Open House—2:00 pm (CT)
Dec 4—Governor's Budget Address—State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 8—Governor's State of the State—State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 13-18—VFW Accredited Service Officer Training—Annapolis, MD
Mar 3-7—VFW Legislative Conference
July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL



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South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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